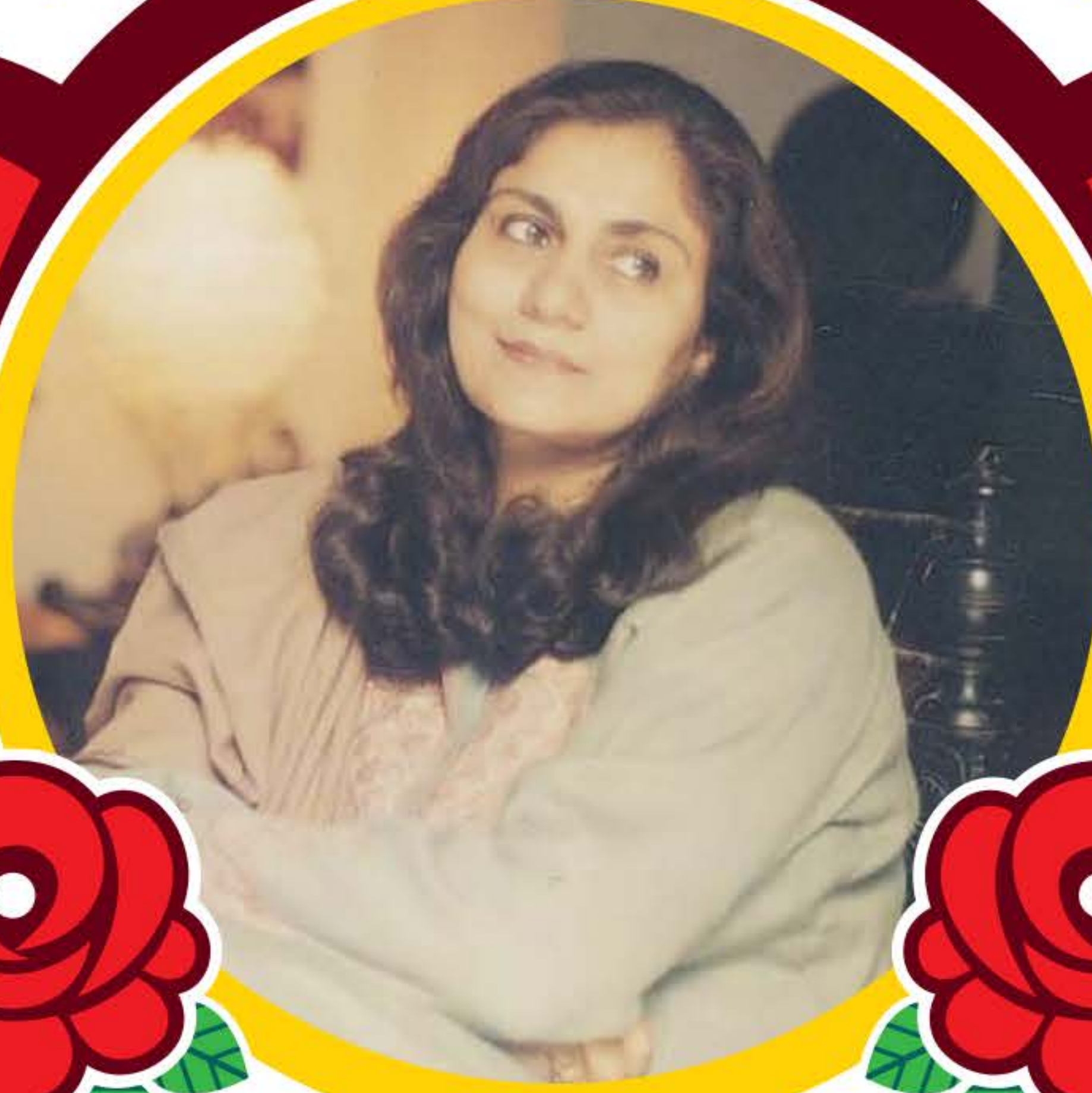




Ajoka Newsletter

Jan 2022 - Mar 2022

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Vision

Ajoka has been committed to the ideals of peace and tolerance, within Pakistan and in the region. Ajoka has collaborated with theatre activists from other countries of South Asia particularly from India & Bangladesh, even in times when any contact across the border was considered treason.

Ajoka attaches great importance to developing contacts with theatre groups in other countries, particularly in Asia. It has long-standing relations with theatre groups in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri-Lanka, the Philippines and has worked on joint productions with several groups of these countries and the International Drama and Education Association (IDEA).

Within Pakistan Ajoka has worked with NGOs such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the Family Planning Association of Pakistan, the WWF, the Goethe Institute, the Heinrich-Boll Foundation, the War Against Rape and the Alhamra Arts Council. It has a special relationship with the women's movement and a large number of Ajoka plays have addressed the gender issue. Ajoka also has close relations with the US-based Theatre without Borders.

Band Gali ke Bachay



Ajoka Institute's "Art of Acting-Kids Edition" students pulled off a remarkable performance at PILAC on 22nd Jan, 2022. Stepping on stage for the first time, it was truly an enlightening, fun packed & confidence building experience for the little ones. New performance by the next batch is coming soon!



Two plays at Al-Hamra



After a gap of two years the Alhamra Hall was full to an excited capacity crowd! Ajoka institute's Art of Acting students thrilled the audiences with their energetic performances, while Ajoka Theatre's "Lappar" touched upon sensitive issues of gender stereotypes and archaic mindsets.



Dramatic Readings



Ajoka Institute's "Art of Writing" students, presented a series of Dramatic Readings of their original and thought provoking plays at Shakir Ali Museum on 12th Feb, The scripts were developed over a course of three months under the mentorship of Shahid Nadeem. They included:

Fizza Hassan's "Prison Games": A theatre play about a group of death row inmates and those who decide whether they will be hanged or not,

Hamna Afzal's "Mahrukh": An anchor with a scarred face,

Ummer Ameen's "Suicide Point"

Nazia Kamran's "The Haunted Library"



Kaun Hai Ye Gustakh



Ajoka Theatre's acclaimed play "Kaun Hai Yeh Gustakh" received a standing ovation from jam packed audience on the opening day of the Faiz Festival. Originally, the play was written by Shahid Nadeem and directed by Madeeha Gauhar. It revolves around the life and times of great short story writer Saadat Hassan Manto. An Indian delegation of eminent intellectuals who attended the show was welcomed by the audience with sustained applause. The Indian guests included Kulminder Singh Gill, Preeti Gil, Sarabjot Behal, Arvinder Chamak and eminent writer and director from Bombay, Atul Tiwari. Mr Tiwari in his speech appreciated the production and theme of the play. He also paid tribute to play's director Late Madeeha Gauhar for her contribution towards Indo- Pak peace.

The cast of the play included Naseem Abbas, Uzma Hassan, Kamran Mujahid, Qaiser Khan, Umar Bhatti, Shizza Khan, Rizwan Riaz, Usman Zia, Usman Chaudhry, Ali Haider and Fahad Hashmi.



Shahkaar Awards '22



Legendary classical dancer Zarin Panna was bestowed “Shahkaar Against All Odds Award” for her valuable contribution to the world of dance, despite personal and social challenges. The award was given by Justice (rtd) Nasira Javed Iqbal, chairperson of the jury at a graceful ceremony held at Alhamra.

Versatile theatre actor Usman Zia was awarded the “Shahkaar: Stage the Change” award for excellence in theatre. The awards were instituted in 2020 in the memory of Ajoka’s veteran actor Arshad Durrani and sponsored by his daughter, eminent artist, Sumaya Durrani and Shahkaar Higher Education Hub. The awards carry shields, designed by Sumaya Durrani, and a cash award. Justice (rtd) Nasira Javed congratulated the award recipients and appreciated the role of Ajoka in promoting socially meaningful theatre and grooming young talent. Zarin Panna said she was overwhelmed by the honour.

Veteran film writer Pervez Kaleem spoke about Panna’s career while Sohail Warraich traced the growth of Usman Zia’s acting career. Jury Secretary and Ajoka chair Zara Salman talked about the selection process adopted by the jury which included Justice Nasira Iqbal, ex-VC GC University Dr Hassan Amir Shah, poet and playwright Asghar Nadeem Syed, Ajoka General Secretary Sohail Warraich and Visual artist Saira Dar.



World Theatre Day



Ajoka Theatre, observed the World Theatre Day on 27 March by holding a special meeting attended by Ajoka members, students of theatre and invited guests. The theatre day is observed all over the world under the auspices of International Theatre Institute (ITI).

The event started with a screening of World Theatre Day message by playwright Shahid Nadeem which he had written on the invitation of ITI. The message titled "Theatre as a Shrine" was translated in over 60 languages and read out in nearly 90 countries. Speaking on the occasion, Shahid Nadeem explained his concept of Sufi Theatre which combines the spiritual forces of Sufism with contemporary themes. He cited the example of his internationally acclaimed play, "Bulha", which inspired both modern theatre-goers as well as traditional audience having strong association with Sufi values.

Actors including Naseem Abbas, Nirvaan Nadeem, Qaiser Khan, Usman Raaj, Usman Zia, Rizwan Riaz and Usman Chaudhry, who had performed various roles in the play, shared their experiences of touring with the play in Pakistan and abroad. Others who spoke on the occasion included Ajoka Chair Zara Salman, Madeeha Rasheed, Ishrat Shaheen and Aisha Khan.

Ajoka had also posted the foreign language versions of Shahid's World Theatre Day message including Farsi, Arabic, Spanish, French, Chinese, Bengali and Italian.



Madeeha celebrated

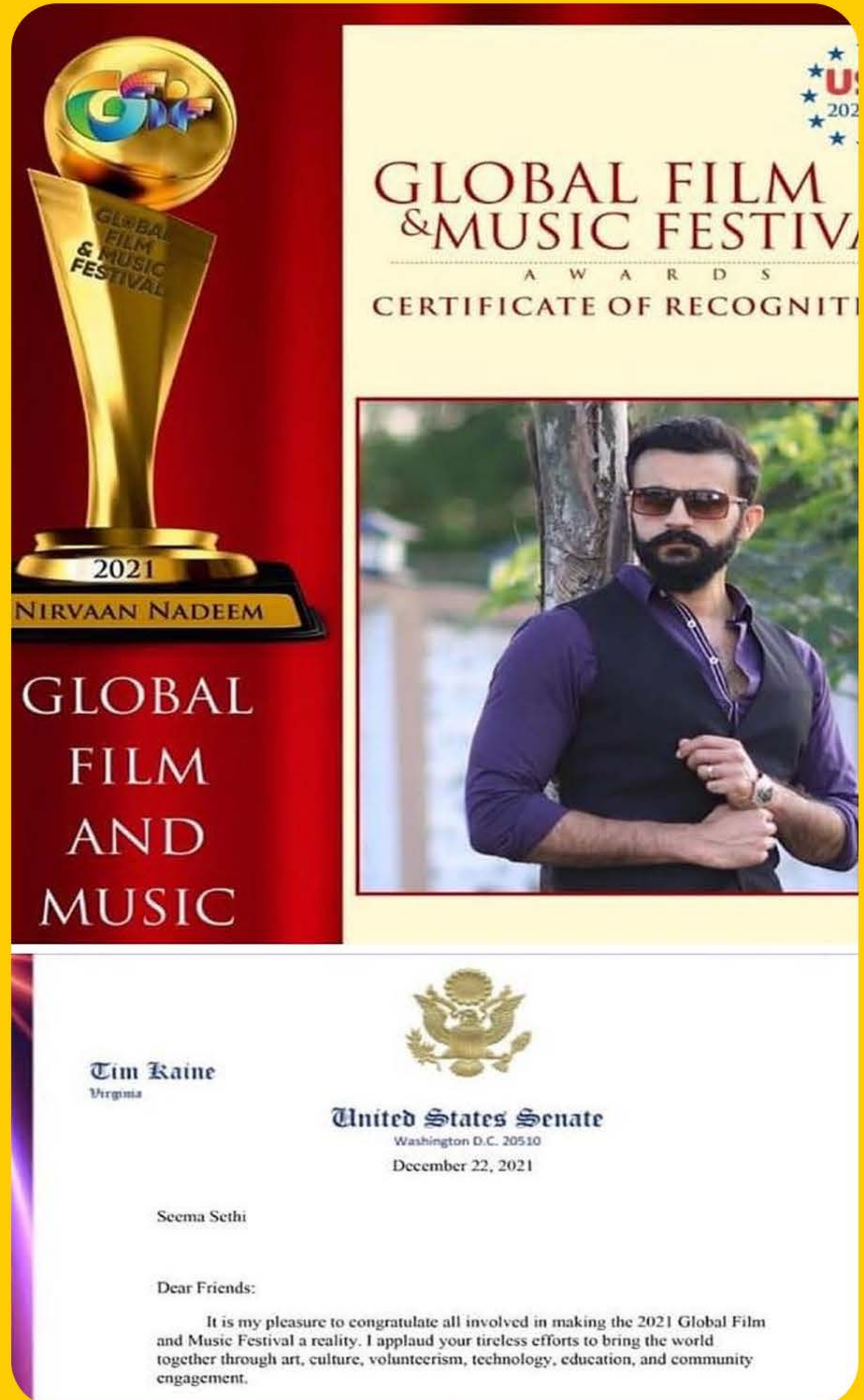


Ajoka core members, family and friends celebrated Madeeha Gauhar's birthday on 8 February. The event was also attended by Madeeha's husband Shahid Nadeem and son Nirvaan Nadeem. Zara Salman played sitar while Luke Kelvin presented a dance performance dedicated to Madeeha. Usman Raaj, Naseem Abbas and Kanwal Christopher offered musical tributes and sang some of Madeeha's favorite songs.



Global Film & Music Award

Nirvaan Nadeem, head of Ajoka Institute, won the Global Film and Music Award 2021 for his contribution to theatre. The US-based organisation announced the awards at a ceremony held in Virginia. The winners include a Indian composer Anu Malik, singer Poornima, actor Shishir Sharma, Singer Sanchi Mukerji, director David Serero and composer Milind Shrivastav.



Art of Acting

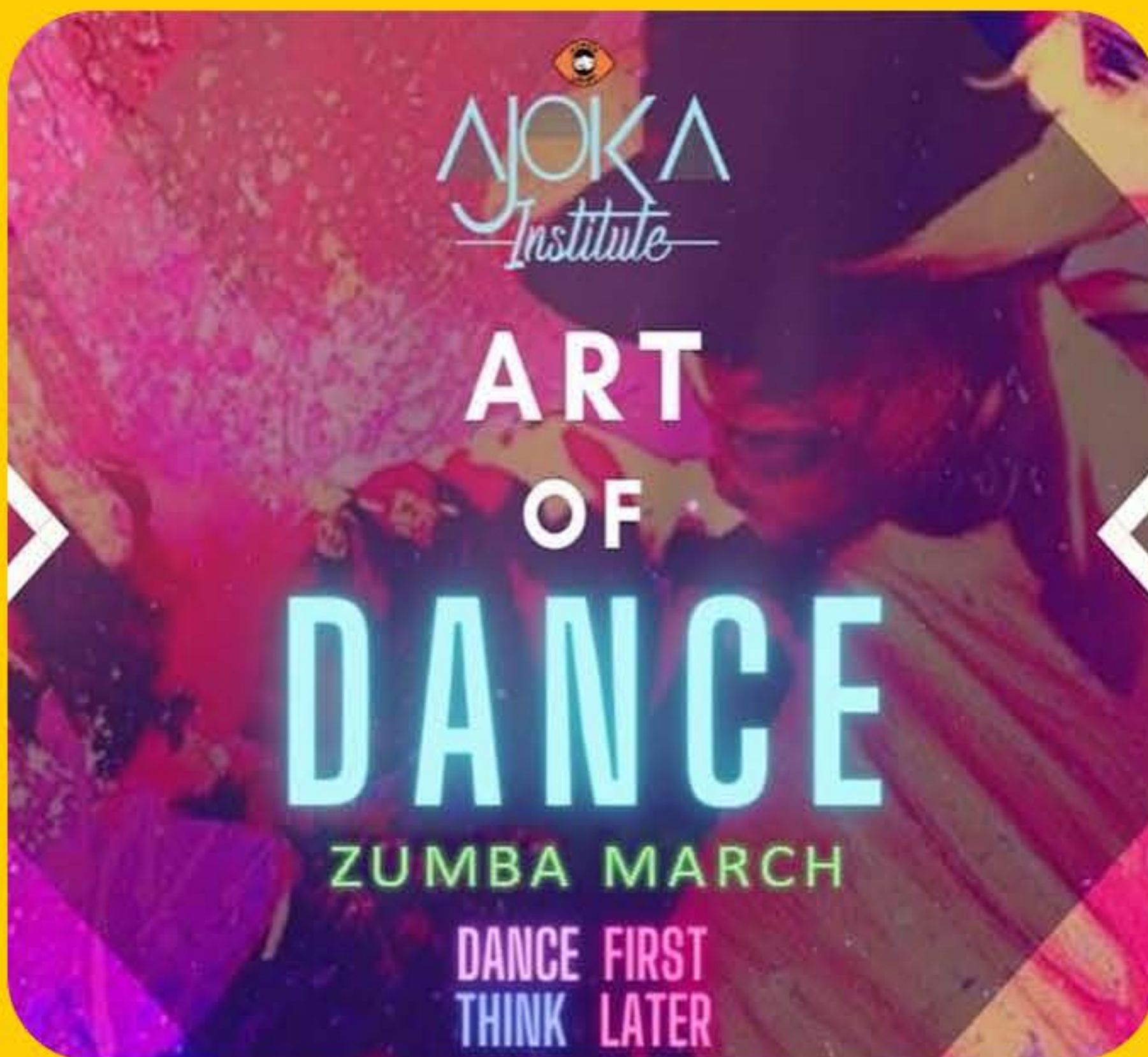


Art of Acting is a recurring course conducted by Ajoka Institute. Nirvaan Nadeem, head of Ajoka Institute, realised that Pakistan needs to educate soft skills among the youth. It is the need of the hour to instill the importance of learning art forms and theatre to progress as a country with equal contribution in the art form around the world. New course commenced in January.



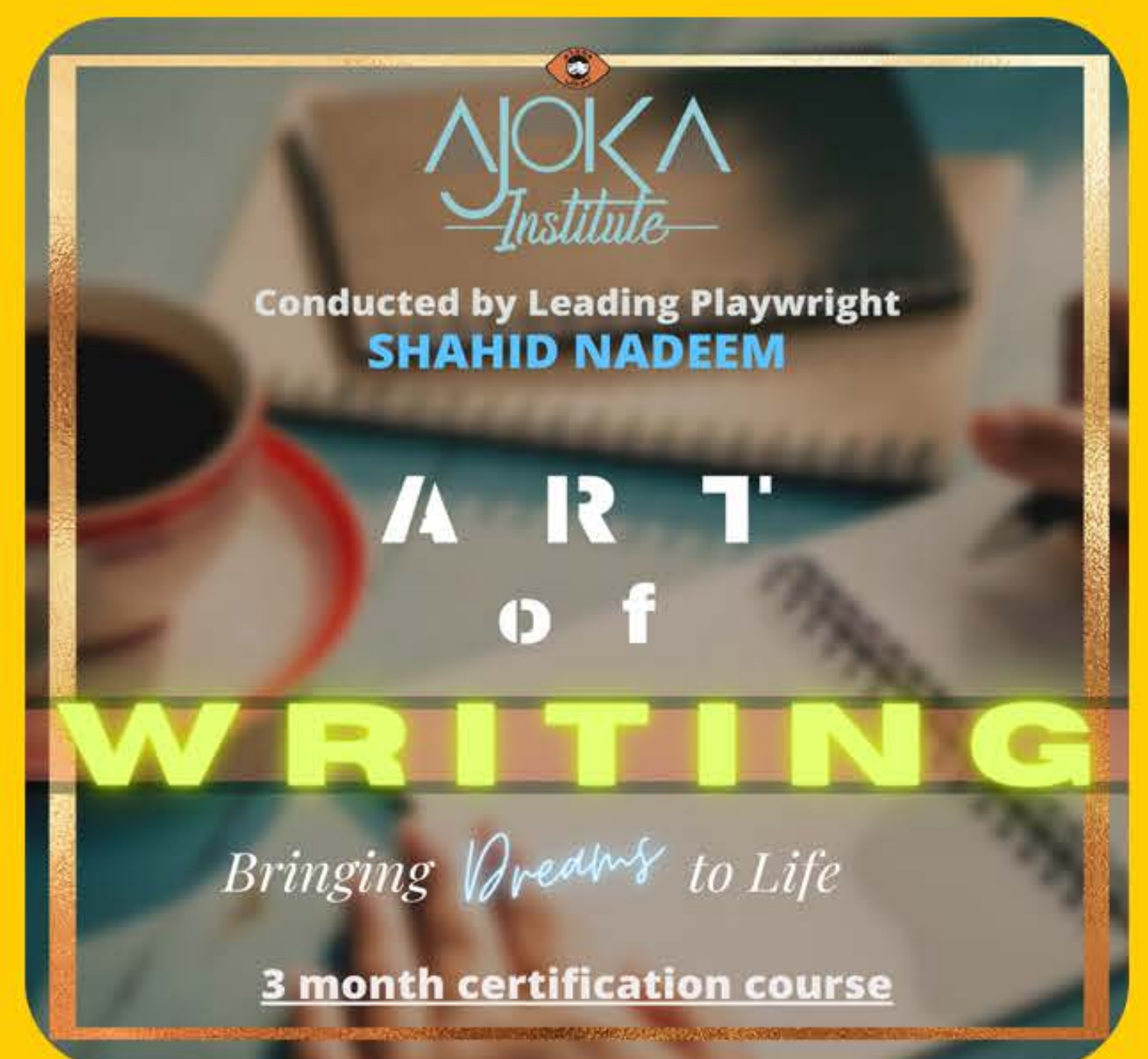
Leading Film/TV Writer Fasih Bari Khan conducted a memorable Master Class for the "Art of Writing" students & Alumni. He shared his experience as a playwright and answered questions.

More new courses



Ajoka Institute welcomed more students in four new recurring courses. Art of Dance, Art of Writing (online & on-ground), Art of Acting for kids and Art of Acting for adults.

All courses are followed up with performances open to public to showcase and prove that all talented individuals just need some guidance, confidence and a chance to polish their skills.





Thank You!

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